

Message Text

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SUBJECT: CONTROVERSIAL REPORT ON EMPLOYMENT DISCRIMINATION IN
THE TWO COMMUNITIES OF ULSTER

1. SUMMARY: A REPORT BY AN INDEPENDENT OFFICIAL AGENCY REVEALS A "SERIOUS IMBALANCE" IN EMPLOYMENT AGAINST THE CATHOLIC COMMUNITY IN NORTHERN IRELAND. THIS IS A CONTROVERSIAL SUBJECT, AND THE REPORT HAS SPARKED OFF CRITICISM AND DEBATE FROM ALL SHADES OF OPINION IN THE PROVINCE. END SUMMARY.

2. ONE OF THE MAJOR ISSUES RAISED BY THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT IN NORTHERN IRELAND DURING THE LATE YP'S WAS THE HOTLY DEBATED QUESTION OF DISCRIMINATION AGAINST CATHOLICS IN THE JOB MARKET. IN AN ATTEMPT TO GIVE A STATISTICAL BASE TO THE ARGUMENTS ABOUT EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY, THE FAIR EMPLOYMENT AGENCY FOR NORTHERN IRELAND (FEA - CREATED BY THE FAIR EMPLOYMENT (N.I.) ACT 1976) PUBLISHED A STUDY ENTITLED AN INDUSTRIAL AND OCCUPATIONAL PROFILE OF THE TWO SECTIONS OF THE POPULATION IN NORTHERN IRELAND: AN ANALYSIS OF THE 1971 POPULATION CENSUS" (COPY POUCHED TO EUR/NE).

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3. THE BASIC CONCLUSIONS OF THIS DOCUMENT ARE THAT AS OF 1971 (THE DATE OF THE LAST CENSUS):

(A) THE LEVEL OF UNEMPLOYMENT IN THE CATHOLIC COMMUNITY WAS PROPORTIONALLY TWO-AND-ONE-HALF TIMES GREATER THAN THAT EXPERIENCED IN THE PROTESTANT COMMUNITY.

(B) THERE WAS A TENDENCY FOR THOSE INDUSTRIES WITH THE HIGHEST WEEKLY WAGE FOR MANUAL WORK TO BE STAFFED MAINLY BY

PROTESTANTS.

- (C) THERE WAS A DISTINCT NEGATIVE DISPROPORTION IN THE NUMBER OF CATHOLICS IN MANAGERIAL POSITIONS IN VIRTUALLY ALL INDUSTRIES.
- (D) THE OCCUPATIONAL PROFILE OF THE AVERAGE PROTESTANT MALE WAS "SKILLED MANUAL WORKER," WHILE HIS CATHOLIC COUNTERPART WAS AN "UNSKILLED MANUAL WORKER."

4. PREDICTABLY THE REPORT HAS BEEN VARIOUSLY HAILED AND CONDEMNED -- THOUGH ONE WONDERS IF CAREFULLY READ -- BY THE VARIOUS POLITICAL PARTIES. FRANK FEELY, THE SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC AND LABOUR PARTY (SDLP) SPOKESMAN ON COMMERCE, CONCLUDED THAT THE REPORT REVEALED THE NEED FOR A "DELIBERATE CAMPAIGN OF POSITIVE DISCRIMINATION TOWARD CATHOLICS." ON THE OTHER HAND, REVEREND MARTIN SMYTH, HEAD OF THE ORANGE ORDER AND DEPUTY CHAIRMAN OF THE OFFICIAL UNIONIST PARTY, ACCUSED THE REPORT OF "CAUSING UNNECESSARY FRUSTRATION IN ALL SECTIONS OF THE COMMUNITY, AND REVEREND IAN PAISLEY, CHAIRMAN OF THE DEMOCRATIC UNIONIST PARTY (DUP), ACCUSED THE "SO-CALLED FAIR EMPLOYMENT AGENCY" OF USING QUESTIONABLE STATISTICS TO REACH A BIASED CONCLUSION." ANOTHER SAYS THAT ULSTER BENEFITS FROM THE PROTESTANT WORK ETHIC, BUT CATHOLICS PREFER THE DOLE TO THE LONG APPRENTICESHIP LEADING TO BETTER JOBS.

5. COMMENT: SOME OF THE CRITICISMS OF THE REPORT ARE CORRECT. THE STATISTICAL BASE, THOUGH THE LATEST AVAILABLE, IS THE 1971 CENSUS. ALTHOUGH WEIGHTING FACTORS WERE INCLUDING IN THE STUDY, UNCLASSIFIED

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THE CONCLUSIONS MAY BE AFFECTED BY THE FACT THAT 9.4 PERCENT OF THE POPULATION REFUSED TO ANSWER THE QUESTIONS ON RELIGION IN THAT CENSUS (IN ALL PREVIOUS CENSUS SURVEYS ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON RELIGION WERE COMPULSORY). IN ADDITION, CHANGES HAVE OCCURED SINCE 1971: MANY FIRMS HAVE ADOPTED A MORE OPEN HIRING POLICY, THE PUBLIC SECTOR HAS ADOPTED AN UNSPOKEN POLICY OF DELIBERATE CATHOLIC RECRUITMENT, AND LEGISLATION, SUCH AS THE 1976 ACT WHICH CREATED THE FEA, HAS HELPED EASE THE PROBLEM.

6. NONETHELESS, BOB COOPER, FORMER LEADER OF THE ALLIANCE PARTY AND CHAIRMAN OF THE FEA, ACCURATELY DESCRIBES THIS REPORT AS A "BASE LINE" GROUNDED IN "CLEARLY ESTABLISHED FACTS -- NOT ON ALLEGATIONS AND COUNTER ALLEGATIONS." COOPER NOTES THAT THE REPORT INDICATES THAT A "SERIOUS IMBALANCE" EXISTED IN 1971, AND CONTINUES THAT THE IMBALANCE DID NOT NECESSARILY INDICATE "DELIBERATION DISCRIMINATION". IT DOES SHOW, HOWEVER, THAT IN MANY AREAS THE IMBALANCE WAS SO GREAT THAT MUCH MORE THAN HAS BEEN DONE NEEDS TO BE DONE TO OVERCOME THE PROBLEM. THE REPORT CERTAINLY SUGGESTS THAT IN SOME AREAS DE FACTO IF NOT DE JURE DISCRIMINATION DID EXIST AND PROBABLY CONTINUES TO EXIST.

7. BECAUSE OF THE AGE OF THE DATA IT CAN BE ARUGED THAT THIS

REPORT IS SIMPLY A FOOTNOTE TO THE HISTORY OF THE "TROUBLES"
IN NORTHERN IRELAND. IF SO, IT IS A FOOTNOTE WHICH HELPS TO
EXPLAIN THE ROOT CAUSES OF THOSE DIFFICULTIES. BUT IN ITS CALL
FOR A REDRESS TO THE IMBALANCE, THE REPORT SUGGESTS ONE ASPECT
TO A POSSIBLE LONG-TERM SOLUTION TO THE PROBLEMS OF ULSTER.
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